

ENGLISH
CHILDREN

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ENGLISH CHILDREN

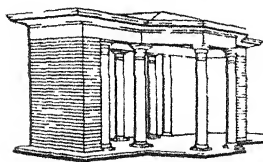
GENERAL EDITOR
J. TURNER

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ENGLISH CHILDREN

SYLVIA LYND

WITH
12 PLATES IN COLOUR
AND
28 ILLUSTRATIONS IN
BLACK & WHITE



WILLIAM COLLINS OF LONDON

MCMXXXII

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HEADS OF ANGELS

Detail from the oil painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1787

NOT Angles, but angels, said St. Gregory when he first caught sight of English children, jumping, perhaps, too hastily to his conclusion. Perhaps, however, the fair heads and porcelain limbs prompted, in truth, a prophetic wisdom, though English children were not destined to appear in angelic aspect again until Sir Joshua Reynolds so saw and painted them more than a thousand years later, and marked, though he did not know it, the threshold of the modern world.

From St. Gregory's vision in the slave market English civilisation may be said, quite without sentimentalism, to have sprung; for it was he who later sent Augustine to reconvert to Christianity Rome's abandoned province, to pluck the heathen English, its new rulers, from God's wrath and call them to Christ's mercy and, by adding a fair proportion of Christian virtues to their natural habits of courage, love of freedom and of honest bargaining, to make the amalgam of qualities that their race most prizes. Here, anyhow, an account of English children must begin, a radiant beam of light upon the subject and its future history incontrovertibly indicated.

The plucking of children from the wrath of God, from Death and the Devil, or whatever the current terms for them happen to be, has been the preoccupation

of most parents and guardians of the young throughout the ages, and has been followed with great energy, though not until recent times, with any very great success. Children have been a much menaced part of humanity, suffering not only the private misfortunes of their families should these occur, together with whatever public disasters such as wars, famines, pestilences, fires, tempests, persecutions or other hardships happened to be about, but, in addition, having to endure whatever method of being brought up the grown-up people of the Age designed for them. The plucking of children from the wrath of parents and teachers and commercial exploiters has been one of the more satisfactory achievements of our growing civilisation.

Children have usually been loved by their parents, but that love has sometimes chosen queer ways of expressing itself, and even the simplest and kindest affection has seldom in past ages been securely happy. Only in late Victorian days was the shadow of early death lifted from childhood, a shadow that, with the present war, has fallen again. We had learnt, after prolonged and sad experiment, when this century opened, to keep children alive, and the death of a child had become, instead of the commonest of griefs, the rarest. Children were stronger, or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say, more durable than they had ever been before. It can be said with equal certainty, that they were happier. They had contrived to survive the worst mischances of Nature and the best intentions of Man. They had endured, if not with unflagging spirits, dirt and disease and scarcity and discomfort and solicitude and pedantry and piety and the idealisation of obedience and order, until at last they had found themselves in a sane, new, wrathless world in which parents could be talked to as equals and teachers as friends. Intelligence had taken the place of fear as the foundation of discipline.

We have our temporary misfortunes; but the story of English children at the present hour is a story that moves towards a happy ending.





WAYFARERS IN THE 14TH CENTURY
Illumination from *Queen Mary's Psalter*

CHILDREN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

IN attempting to trace this history, it must be remembered, that ages do not follow one another like cars in a procession, but overlap one another like the scales of a fish; that some of these overlappings are many centuries long; that kind people and cruel people have existed in all ages, only the proportion and degree vary; but that a certain limpid quality of mind best described as beauty of spirit, seems to have existed and recurred regardless of time—the possession of the small and scattered company of the naturally good—and to have at last begun to shape our social pattern.

To begin with we must imagine a world of the utmost hardship and almost inconceivable want, without beds to sleep in, chairs to sit in, clothes to shift into; a world in which a single cup had to serve a dinner party, and the loss of a needle could set a whole village in an uproar; where nothing could be obtained without the utmost energy and foresight, and even the time of day could not be known without someone to turn the hour-glass or run to the sundial.

English houses, for the most part, were thatched, and consisted of one single room with, perhaps, a loft over it; though in the great stone castles that the Norman invaders were having built for their protection, the central halls were surrounded by small rooms built in the thickness of the walls, and there were upper storeys, staircases and galleries. By the time that any number of these castles were finished, however, it was already the twelfth century.

The Normans taught the English a new diffidence and taciturnity ; they brought them a bolder and more decorative way of living and they introduced a much more effective rule than the native one. The Anglo-Saxons had a tenacious habit of selling their children or, preferably, the children of their tenants, to foreign slave-merchants in spite of the repeated passing of laws both civil and ecclesiastical against it. This manner of disposing of the younger members of the community continued until William the Conqueror put a stop to it and abolished the Bristol slave-trade. After that, English children did not stand in foreign slave-markets again.

The baby of the early Middle Ages slept, like a modern baby, in a basket made of rushes and, later in the centuries, in a cradle of wicker or wood. The cradle rested, if it belonged to rich people, on a floor of stone, if to poor ones, on an earthen floor. The wooden cradle had rockers, and a hood to protect the child from draughts and from the flakes of wood-ash that came floating down whenever the fire smoked.

The baby was dressed in linen and, if he was of Norman blood, wore swaddling bands. Later these came into general use, and did not begin to be discontinued until the seventeenth century. It was considered important in all Ages for the baby's linen to be clean.

The mediæval baby was nursed by its mother, and how jealous of her privilege a mediæval mother could be is illustrated in the story of the lady with the three fine sons whom she never did suffer, for any cause whatsoever, should be suckled by waiting woman or damozel. One day, the lady being late in returning from mass, one of the three sons awakened "wailing sore and howling," and a maiden rashly "called a damozel and bade her suckle the child." On the lady's return she guessed from seeing some milk on his chin what had happened, and "swiftly she flew all trembling with rage and caught the child under the arms. There on a mighty table she bade them spread out a purple quilt: there she rolled the child and caught him by the shoulders that he delayed not to give up the milk which he had sucked." "Yet ever after were his deeds and his renown the less," the chronicler tells us, "even to the day of his death." An inferiority clearly attributable to the unfortunate intervention of the maiden and the damozel.

The child who had outgrown the cradle slept with the rest of the household on the floor. We can imagine that it must have been pleasant enough to wake in summer and see the swallows flying in and out of the glassless windows, and pleasanter still to fall asleep with the fire still glowing, the rushlight shining and the voices gradually ceasing one by one. The child, after a hard day's running about and sitting on benches without backs, must have slept warmly and well under his corner of the blanket.

Rushes seem to have made the earliest beds—"a bed of rushes was under me last night and I threw it abroad at the heat of the day," says the old Gaelic poem, and this may account for mediæval floors being habitually strewn with rushes, for how should they not have been so strewn? Hay and straw were also used for bedding, but the litter was often confined in mattresses and pallets which, it



THE BIRTH OF ST. EDMUND
Illumination from a 15th century MS of Lydgate's *Life of St. Edmund*

was early required, should be "unsunken in hollows." These pallets might lie on the floor or on bedsteads. Feather mattresses were in use by the fifteenth century, the four post bedsteads that had made the bedroom of kings now stood in separate rooms. Only rich people had these, however, and rich children might have pallet beds, or truckle beds that slipped under the big beds and were brought out at night, but servants and poorer children still slept in the straw. "Clean straw" lingered for centuries as slang for clean bedding. By the seventeenth century a manual of manners was still warning children to "cast up" their beds when they rose or they would be thought like animals, and to be careful not to lose their "gear" in the bed (their pen-knife and quills, perhaps, or if girls, their needles). A littered house would not have troubled a child at any time, however.

Cold was the child's first enemy, but as England has always been a land of flocks as well as of draughts we need not doubt that the baby's linen clouts were supplemented with plenty of woollen ones, both shawls and blankets. Homespun, flax or wool, was the only wear and the thud of the loom must have been a continual sound in mediæval houses. All the wool and flax had first to be spun; so with



BIRCHING A SCHOOLBOY
Illuminated initial from a 14th century MS

distaff and spindle someone was busy all day long and to spinning and singing English babies throughout a dozen centuries fell asleep. For the rest, they spent their time as babies do, in feeding or sucking their fists or, less pleasantly, in "weeping," to the appeasement of which, if we can trust the carol writers, a highly gratifying amount of lalooing and ballooing, lullaying and lullabying was devoted—indeed, I suspect that the word *hullabaloo* is derived from the sounds made by the mediæval baby and its admirers.

As the child grew older it wore, instead of clouts, "cottes," or petticoats as we should call them ; boys

and girls being clad alike in gowns that reached their feet, with a short under tunic which was, probably, knitted. After the first six years the boys were happily promoted to "chausse," close-fitting trousers with feet, with which they wore a shirt and tunic, or tabard, with a belt from which to hang their knife and pocket. In cold weather a cloak or surcoat covered these, and over that again went a hood, with a point at the back and enough stuff round the neck to cover the shoulders. Such hoods, children in England, every winter, now wear again. Gloves too were worn ; and heel-less shoes made of cloth or soft leather ; but these were not for the poor ; poor children ran barefoot. Girls were less fortunate than boys ; they were kept in long dresses or "bliauts" reaching to the ground all their lives, and under these wore petticoats.

The homespun that was cheapest was the undyed natural wool the colour then called hodden-grey. This, workmen and country people wore and it must largely have been used for children. Rich people might have carefully matched white or dark shearings, or clothes of scarlet, crimson, green, blue or purple dye, and lords wore cloth of gold and silver. But stuffs were sent to be dyed abroad and dyed stuffs were therefore expensive ; so we may imagine that a mediæval child seldom got more besides his hodden grey than a bright cap or a parti-coloured tunic when his mother or elder sister was given a new "bliaut." Parents are warned in the old books of manners not to let children indulge their fancies in regard to clothes, not to have them cut or jagged or gawdy ; but since this advice was offered, we may believe that it was not taken, and that many children were dressed as gaily as they liked to be.

When the baby had to be weaned it was fed upon bread and milk, but it did not remain a young mulk-sop longer than it could help, and was eager, we may

be sure, to be promoted to small beer, and this it began to drink at latest by the age of six. As soon as children could run about, however, life became superabundantly full of interest for them and they lived as they do still whenever they have the opportunity. They watched the drama of coming and going and fetching and making things that went on before them all day.

All the processes of manufacture that are now hidden from our eyes went on then in or near the house, and the mediæval child learned, without knowing that he learned, the ways of every craft, every sport, every weapon. If he were a poor child he learned about feeding hens and pigs and ploughing, pruning, hedging and ditching, if a rich one, about hawking and hunting and the use of arms. Both saw, at intervals, arrows feathered or armour fitted when men at arms were mustered; both learned to know by the patterns of the escutcheons and badges what great men or their followers were at hand, and they knew the rules of jousting or singlestick as now they know the rules of football and cricket. All boys learned to shoot with bow and arrows as late as the Elizabethan Age.

Besides all this there were for the rich child indoor games to be watched or played—backgammon and chess, blindman's buff, forfeits and skittles; and hopscotch and marbles must surely be among the oldest games to have been played upon the flagstones of a courtyard or stone-paved hall. The child's chief plaything, then as now, however, was a ball. From this enjoyment girls were not excluded. Stoolball, the origin of cricket, was considered a woman's game (I suspect because it was played by the spinsters and knitters when they had taken the distaff and spindle and the three-legged wooden stools out into the sun for a good afternoon's work). As mediæval houses were full of pet birds, tame hawks and falcons, besides dogs and puppies, and cats to be chased from the cradle and the dinner-table, there must always have been plenty of enjoyment for a child.

On fine days the children were sent to play out of doors, and warned not to climb into other people's gardens after their ball—or for any other reason—but on wet days they stayed indoors with their elders in the room which was at once dining room, kitchen and bedroom, and, above all, parlour. Over their heads a tide of talk roared or rippled all day long. They heard all the quarrels and secrets of the household and all the gossip of the neighbourhood when a neighbour walked in to borrow something or to bring something back. The mediæval Manor House in many respects was like a cottage kitchen at the present day.

If the child remained well, if he got successfully through his weaning and the cow did not go dry, he must have lived happily enough running about beside his mother as a foal runs beside a mare, and chattering like a jay. If he became ill for any reason, his lot was not likely to be fortunate. A sick or delicate child meant, too often, a doomed child. He lived not only in dishevelment, but amid dirt of all kinds. The ancient world had established an appearance of neatness and order long before any sort of cleanliness had been achieved. Not only had the child to endure minor ailments such as chilblains and colds in winter, and skin eruptions in spring; but the ordinary infectious fevers of childhood must often have left behind diseased eyes and ears. It would be pleasant to think that

in the mediæval world there were no alternatives except to be very well or dead; but blind people and deaf people, cripples and dwarfs and hunchbacks are part of the mediæval background; as are scurvy, malaria, leprosy, typhus and the recurrent murrains of bubonic plague. About infection nothing was known except the wisdom of shunning it. Families were large; but seldom or never all grew up. We sometimes find a mediæval tomb bearing the figures not only of the man and wife but of all their children living and dead, the living shewn standing, ten or eleven strong, boys and girls behind one another, the dead, wrapped in grave clothes, lying down. At once how little out of the ordinary and how great a grief the death of a child was, is indicated in the old treatise upon manners which instructs the mother as to how she ought to behave on such an occasion. She is enjoined to mourn quietly. For people in general the important thing about the death of a child was that it should have been first baptised.

The end of winter when there were few green vegetables, flour might be exhausted and salted fish succeeded salted meat as a main part of the diet, must have been a dangerous time for children. At all times the children of the rich, with their pasties left to "ripen," and much game as well as meat to eat, were probably worse off from the point of view of health than poor children, who were fed on "green cheese, oaten cake, curds and cream, beans, parsley, leeks and cabbages, bran and milk" until the harvest brought them bread made from stone-ground wheaten flour again. A modern dietician would have applauded this diet. For illness the remedies seem to us often absurd, a garland of pennyroyal worn about the head as a cure for headaches and giddiness, or a dish of burning henbane to make the worms that were supposed to be the cause of toothache, fall out of the teeth; but many of them were sensible enough, such as an infusion of camomile or feverfew to produce sweating, a decoction of daisy root to alleviate pain, an onion eaten to cure a cold, or rather less sensibly perhaps, applied to the bite of a mad dog. It is to be noted that most of these old remedies involve the boiling of herbs, either in water or wine, so that whether they were to be drunk or applied as a lotion or a dressing, in each instance a sterile substance was being used, and the medicine had by great good luck the advantage of being clean. Baths for the same reason must often have been efficacious even had they not had infused in them hollyhock, mallow, centaury, fennel, heyriif, daisy, ribwort, flax and willow—not to mention wild parsley, hops, water-speedwell, scabious and bugloss. Baths were used for inducing a sweat rather than for simple washing. There was a natural love of water, however, in hot weather, and boys went bathing in streams in summer as they do still.

Any herb might be boiled and used as a possible remedy for anything; apparently and presumably this custom led to the discovery, on the introduction of Corrinth raisins and lemons into England, of those still beloved nursery remedies for colds, black-currant tea and hot lemonade. Rhubarb was also discovered by chance in the same way, and became a less pleasant part of nursery ritual from James I's time onwards. Poisonous plants were known from early times and children were warned against the deadly nightshade, toadstools, henbane, monkshood and

saffron. They were warned against the berries of a yew tree and against its shadow as they were warned against wolves and witches.

The child went with his parents to mass in the splendid great new churches that could hold all the town and learned his Latin hymns and prayers and responses by ear, or, anyhow, something like them, "perry, merry dixi domine"—and he learned to fear damnation, and to be sorry about death. Children learned their first manners at church, to curtsy, doff the cap and bend the knee. For them, as for modern children, Christmas was the great feast of the year. With the carols, lighted candles,

green garlands, feasting and presents, we return every year at Christmas to the happiest moments of the Middle Ages.

If a boy had a good singing voice he might become a scholar in one of the choir schools, where he would learn reading, writing and casting accounts, Latin and French and music, and from which he might later be ordained into the priesthood, or become a lay reader and teach in his turn, or devote himself to writing and decorating missals. If he could not sing, he learned the same subjects at the Grammar School. Grammar Schools were not agreeable places, though much less cruel than they became later, probably because few children attended them who had not some natural bent for learning. Saint Anselm in the eleventh century had urged gentleness upon the teachers of the young. "Ye cease not to beat them. And when they are grown to manhood, of what sort are they then?" he asks. "They are dull and brutish," replied the teacher. "With what good profit do ye expend your substance in nurturing human beings till they become brute beasts?" asks the Saint, and he goes on to make his famous comparison of the goldsmith "who does not shape his gold or silver into a fair image by blows alone." But his counsel was ignored for the next eight hundred years. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" continued to be the official maxim for the training of the young until modern times. In the Middle Ages there were so few schools, however, that most children



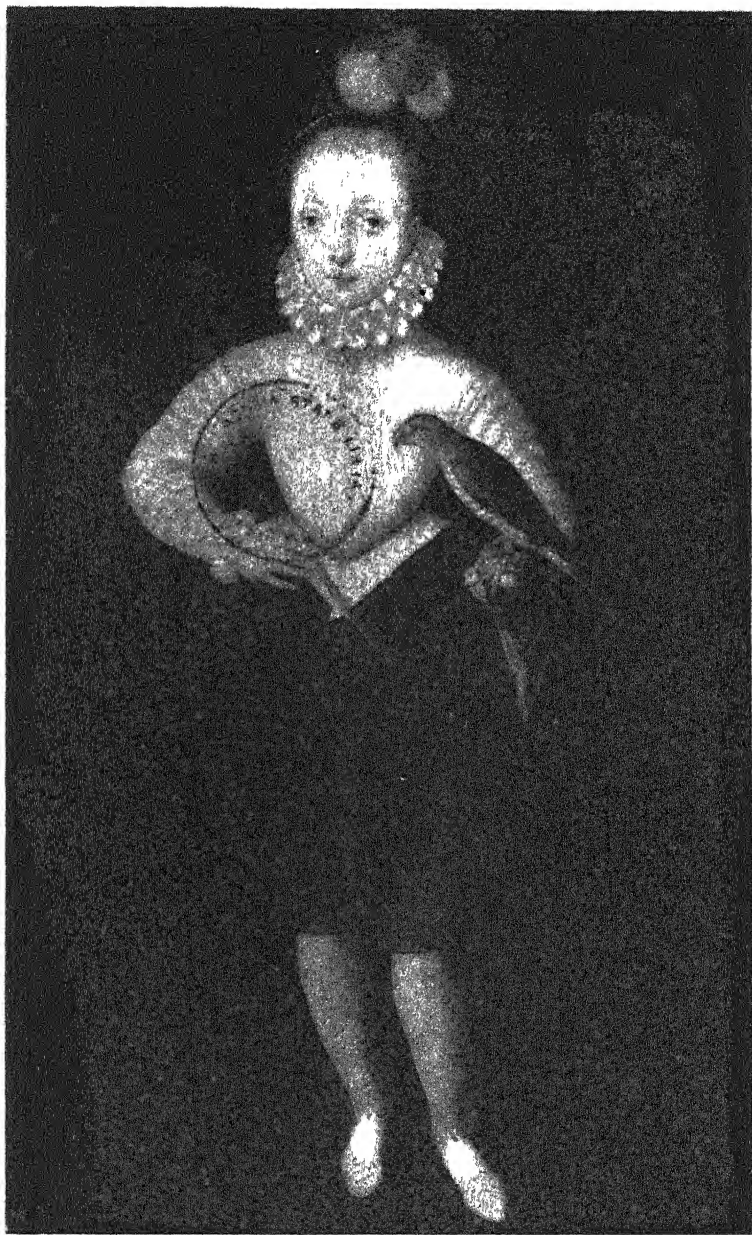
A BOYS' SCHOOL IN THE 14TH CENTURY
Illuminated initial from a contemporary MS

escaped the rule that Anselm had deplored—and from the Miracle Plays we may judge that the devotion lavished upon the infant Christ was not without its reflection elsewhere. "Hail, comely and clean, little day-star, darling dear, sweeting," the child is called. Few mediæval mothers can have achieved the ideal grimness, prescribed for them by the early writers of handbooks on the upbringing of the young.

If thy children be rebel and will not bow them low,
If any of them misdo, neither curse nor blow;
But take a smart rod and beat them in a row,
Till they cry mercy and their guilt well know.

The best that these writers of handbooks have to say of children is a grudging admission that they are not of a revengeful nature. The idea of upbringing was to subdue, and this was the idea upon which Puritanism was later founded. A great many books of manners were written between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Probably the "Babies' Booke" which was addressed to the "Bele Babies" at the court of Edward IV is the best known. The word "babies" was not used in the modern sense, and these pieces of good advice and information as to etiquette were addressed to children of older than nursery years. All these old books inculcate the same lesson, enjoin the same behaviour; silence and immobility. Manners maketh man, says the proverb and mediæval manners have probably contributed more to the English character than to that of any other race in Europe. Courtesy, as it was taught in England, was the result of a watchful observation. It taught its possessor how to produce good humour, but, also, perhaps more effectively, how not to produce bad humour. The love of understatement and hatred of tale-bearing that are particularly English characteristics were rooted, probably, to begin with, in fear of the new French-speaking masters. The first English children who visited the Norman conquerors visited them, far from agreeably, as hostages. Later, the children of the English gentry were sent into the Norman halls to learn French, without which no child could hope to rise in the world. In time this became the English custom of sending children to be brought up in other people's houses. It was noticed also, no doubt, as it is at the present day, that children behave much more circumspectly in other people's houses than they do in their own.

For the poor, the problem was solved by sending the children as early as possible to scare birds, herd cattle, or run errands for small reward or none. The children of the rich, however, could not be packed off so easily, and, chattering like jays, meddling and prying everywhere, must have constantly been a bother to their parents, until the opportunity occurred to send them as pages into the house of some rich friend or relation. For, as Montaigne wrote a few centuries later, "it agreeth not with reason, that a childe be alwaies nuzzled, cockered, dandled, and brought up in his parents lap or sight; for so much as their natural kindnesse, or, as I may call it, tender fondnesse, causeth often, even the wisest to prove so idle, so overnice, and so base-minded." This is still one of the reasons why English parents send their children to boarding schools. In the Middle Ages, a



By courtesy of the Medici Society, London

KING JAMES VI OF SCOTLAND AND I OF ENGLAND, AETAT 8

Oil painting by an unknown artist, 1572

National Portrait Gallery, London



THE FAMILY OF SIR THOMAS BROWNE

By courtesy of the Duke of Devonshire

Oil painting attributed to William Dobson, 1610-1646

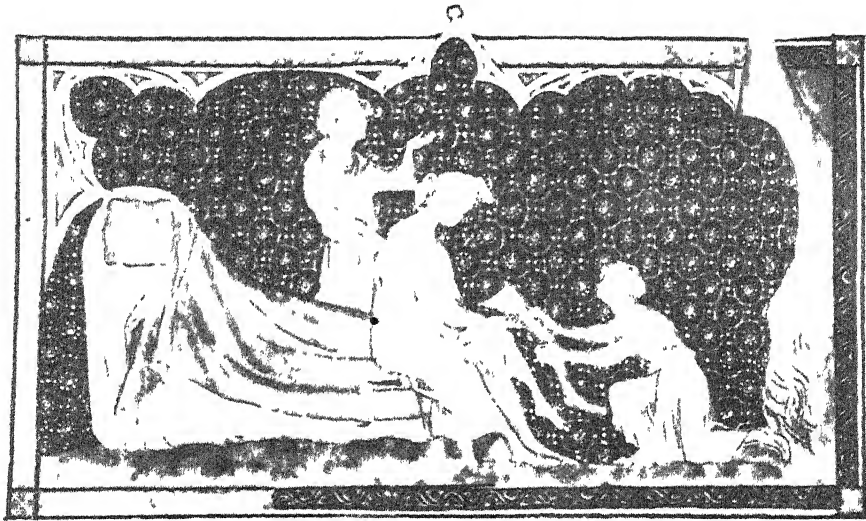
great house was the training ground, and there the child, under the impartial eyes of strangers, learned good manners and how to become useful instead of troublesome to its elders, "A kind courteous child, that could much of wisdom"

At the age of eight away the children would go, the boys to be pages, the little girls to be waiting gentlewomen, to learn to speak French, to improve their curtsies, "leaning not too far forward or too far back," to do embroidery, preserve fruit with sugar, distil perfumes, drink beer and wine measurably, play musical instruments, dance and sing and, with luck, find a husband. Little maids, pretty maids who failed to profit in this way by their training would eventually have to go home and spin. The boys learnt the use of all sorts of arms and to ride, hunt and hawk, swim, wrestle and play games. A young gentleman in a great house would expect to be allotted two servants to wait upon him, while he with other boys waited upon the head of the house. If he were only a younger brother, however, or merely the son of an esquire, he would expect to share the services of one man with another boy of his own class, and would in his turn wait upon a boy in rank above him, attendance in practice much like a modern footman's or valet's, except that the handing of dishes was done on bended knee. There was no social inferiority attached to such service; princes waited upon Kings. The position was like that of a fag at a public school. A boy might be page to his elder brother. He would wear his brother's badge on his cap or his sleeve. As a page he learned how to lay a table, how to carve and wait, to dress and undress his lord and, if necessary, to wash him or get ready his bath, though these last services were not often demanded. He must know how to make a bed, how to serve wine and so on, and, for his own part, to be neat, to wash his face and hands, comb his hair, to use a pocket-handkerchief, not to shuffle with his feet, drum with his heels, gesticulate with his hands, talk or drink with his mouth full, or play with his spoon and fork at meals—just as the smallest children learn now in the nursery. How far from the ways of courts the babies were at the beginning of their training, may be judged by such instructions as these:

Do not claw your head or your back as if you were after a flea, or stroke your hair as if you sought a louse . . . Retch not, nor spit too far, nor laugh or speak too loud. Beware of making faces and scorning; and be no liar with your mouth. Nor yet lick your lips or drivel . . . Do not lick a dish with your tongue to get out the dust.

"Courtesy," says one of these old books, "came down from Heaven when Gabriel greeted the Virgin, and Mary and Elizabeth met", but on the whole it is not the romance of the Middle Ages but its least agreeable realities that appear in these manuals. At their best the writers remind us of Polonius.

Also, my children, against thy lord
Look thou strive with never a word,
Nor wager none with him that lay,
Nor at the dice with him do play.
Him that thou knows of greater state
Be not his fellow in rest or debate.



A GENTLEMAN AT HIS TOILET, WITH HIS YOUNG SQUIRE
 Miniature from *Queen Mary's Psalter*, 14th century

Whatever other discipline the rule of courtesy demanded, the chief one for the pages was silence, stillness and inscrutability. Like statues the English children learned to stand beside the Norman tables, exchanging an expressionless glance occasionally, no doubt, and going outside when dinner was over to talk English with the sentry. It is clear that the children of the Normans learned to speak English faster than English children learned to speak French. The silence that was prescribed for state occasions was a much less effective conversation class than the pages' rooms or the kitchens, and by the end of the fourteenth century French had ceased to be the everyday language of any section of the community and in schools English had replaced it as the language in which instruction was given. Already by Chaucer's time young esquires were expected to be able to read and write. The Great Houses kept tutors to teach the pages.

There had been schools connected with the churches since the time of Bede, but now we find schools as private enterprises, and sometimes jealous rivalry between them. To such an extent were children being educated that one of the demands of the reactionary government which followed Wat Tyler's rebellion was, that "no bondman nor bondwoman shall place their children at school, as has been done, so as to advance their children in the world by their going into the Church"; it was considered a scandalous thing that a lord or a knight might have to kneel to a bishop who had been a bondman's son. This proposal, however, was defeated. Bondmen and bondwomen, after the Black Death, in any case no longer existed. The labourer left the land and went wherever he could find better-paid work. The landowners could not enforce their old right of ownership

of serfs, and the sudden spate of inherited possessions added to the increase of wages, made a great advance in the standard of comfort.

Not only was there a shortage of labourers, there was also a shortage of priests, for the Black Death had killed a quarter of the clergy. To make good this loss, William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1382 founded Winchester College. This was the first of the great English boarding schools and the pattern for all the others. The original purpose was to create a new supply of educated churchmen. "By knowledge of letters," wrote Wykeham, "justice is cultivated and the prosperity of human life increased." To this end he built the present school where "poor and needy scholars" could be housed and clothed and fed, as well as taught. These boys were to be "clerks," "completely learned in reading, plain song and Latin grammar," before they could be admitted, besides being "of good character, well-conditioned and of gentlemanly habits." They were to learn to converse in Latin and to speak beautifully and eloquently, and later to go to Wykeham's new college at Oxford. The first right of admission belonged to Wykeham's own relations, Founder's Kin, for whom he provided linen for sheets, shirts and breeches; canvas, straw, blankets, pillows and coverlets for their beds, and furniture for their rooms. All were to wear gowns which were not to be black, white, brown or grey, or striped, variegated or parti-coloured, or any unbefitting a clerical order. They wore, it is supposed, until the Reformation, red.

The boys could be beaten only on Fridays, a great privilege in those days when "well belashe him" was a mother's request to the schoolmaster to whom she was sending her young son. Wykeham provided ten free places besides those for scholars for "the sons of noble and powerful persons," and so successful did the school become that within twenty years, it contained more than a hundred boys who paid for their teaching, board and lodging. Most of these boys lodged in the town. Some sixty years later Eton was founded upon the same model, Winchester providing the first masters, and in the next 150 years came Shrewsbury, Westminster, Harrow and many others. From now onwards the Great Houses were replaced as centres of education by the Boarding schools.

The Middle Ages were passing away in a sunset glow of rose-colour and crimson with everything damask from roses to sword-blades. Even social life now had its pattern. In that convention a child was a responsible person and no special consideration was extended to it. If it stood in the path of ambition so much the worse for it. The court of Edward IV provides us with an example of all the strangely mingled beliefs and usages of the time. The court was full of bele babies and we find the king, at the marriage of his five year old son to the greatest heiress of the Kingdom, dancing with his daughter the Princess Elizabeth in what seems an entirely care-free and modern fashion. Next moment he is drinking from a golden cup in the bottom of which is set a large piece of unicorn's horn as a prophylactic against poison. We find the little twelve year king Edward V during his imprisonment in the Tower playing at ball, or "seeking remission for his sins by daily confession and penance" in the expectation of being murdered. We find the Queen

like her mother before her, being accused of witchcraft, though from her pleading for her sons we judge her to have been a good and sensible woman. "The desire of a kingdom knows no kindred," said Elizabeth Woodville when Richard Crookback, later King Richard III, sent the Cardinal and the lords to take the little Duke of York from her, out of sanctuary. "I do here deliver him to you and his brother in him," she said, "and shall ask him of you again at all times before God and the world for the trust which his father ever reposed in you, and for the confidence I now put in you, that as you think I fear too much, you would be cautious that in this weighty case you fear not too little, because your credulity here may make an irrecoverable mistake." "Having thus spoken," the chronicle goes on, "she turned to the child and said to him: 'farewell, mine own sweet son: the Almighty be thy protector: let me kiss thee once more before we part, for God knows when we shall kiss again.' And then having kissed him, she blessed him, and turned from him and wept, and so went her way, leaving the child with the lords weeping also for her departure."

These are real people stepped out of the tapestry; Statecraft after this had to begin to make itself respectable. Victims are not always beautiful or blameless, but these victims were both. With these two unhappy children we can take leave of the Middle Ages. The year was 1470—it was the year that Caxton set up his printing press, with the scarlet railings, in Westminster. In the pages of *Morte d'Arthur* which he published in 1485, it is worth noting that there are no small children. Guenevere and la bele Isoud are both childless. Bele babies, so numerous in reality, were out of place in romance. Henry VII, however (or was it perhaps his Queen, elder sister of the Princes in the Tower?) called his eldest son, romantically, Arthur.



ELIZABETHAN CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S luck continued to be out in the sixteenth century. Instead of bele babies at Court there were, to begin with, poor Katherine of Aragon's dead or dying babies, to the number of ten, of whom only one, the Princess Mary, survived. Then came the Princess Elizabeth, so neglected after Anne Boleyn's death that her governess had to send an appeal for clothes for her to the King. "She hath neither gown, nor kirtle," wrote Lady Bryan, "nor petticoat, nor no manner of linen, nor foresmocks, nor kerchiefs, nor rails, nor body stitchets, nor handkerchiefs, nor sleeves, nor mufflers, nor biggins." The Princess clearly had grown out of all her clothes from top to toe. The third child at Court was Edward VI, who died at the age of sixteen of consumption. After that, for fifty years, there were no babies at Court at all.

Babies, indeed, were out of fashion in the Elizabethan age, as we may judge by Jaques's unflattering reference to them, "mewling and puking" in their nurses' arms. Rich women no longer nursed their babies, good old-fashioned nurses with birch-rods were in charge of them instead. Children were more difficult to rear than ever. It is calculated that of the children of the rich at this time two out of five died in infancy and a third in childhood, and among the poor, infant mortality was even higher. With indoor occupations, and the new glass windows keeping out the dangerous night air, and the enormous increase of racial disease; with bubonic plague often recurring, malaria prevalent and the new sweating sickness, or influenza, making its first appearance, public health was worse than ever.

We begin to hear for the first time of changelings, babies stolen by the fairies when a few days old, for whom as a substitute was left a dwindling, prematurely aged creature in the cradle. Fairies themselves had changed from the beautiful elves of the earlier centuries, whose lineage sprang from the nymphs of Greek mythology, or, perhaps, from the old Celtic people, to diminutive creatures whom country girls saw apparently for the most part in the early morning. We may surmise that these were Elizabethan housemaids opening the windows of the great houses, and making their first acquaintance with reflections in glass. These fairy tales enriched the literature of the time and have added to the pleasure of children ever since. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare combined the graces of the earlier tradition with the fun of the new rustic "little people."

Belief in the magical side of religion had decreased among the educated, but while they squabbled about theology, in the popular mind belief in a different magic was growing. England had not an exemplar of the belief to equal Gilles de Rais who confessed to having murdered some six score boys a year in his satanic rites; but wickedness of the same kind had been known in England and had become conspicuous in the thirteenth century with the murder of little Sir Hugh of Lincoln. This child is of importance in English history, for he became in popular legend a saint, and his murder, clearly a ritual witchcraft murder, for

which eighteen Jews were executed, increased the popular clamour against Jews and led to their expulsion in 1290. Witchcraft did not cease to exist with their removal and by the sixteenth century both practice and belief had increased. Witchcraft now, however, became the preoccupation of the ignorant as well as of the over-sophisticated. Child-murder was one of its concomitants, whether as part of its ritual, or as simple infanticide. Among the common people a high proportion of midwives were believed to be witches, a belief which many of them shared, and an infant might be turned, it was supposed, into a witch or a warlock on the night that it was born, in a bargain with Satan over a cottage fire. We read of a nine-year old child accusing her mother, sisters, brothers and family friends of witchcraft and bringing them all to the gallows. Children who suffered from epilepsy might declare themselves bewitched; hysterical children might imagine themselves unable to speak in the presence of the person who had bewitched them.

Such children might come from homes where the rites of witchcraft were practised, for practised they were, though we may confidently assert nowadays with no very gratifying results, but children must have heard witchcraft talked of everywhere by their nurse and her friends, if not by their parents. The repressive, ultra-puritanical home, seems to have produced the greatest number of these neurotic children. Child accusers, however, met often with little success, and self-acclaimed child sorcerers seem, in England, to have had no success at all. We find no record of child executions or tortures, as we do on the Continent in these times, probably because organised religion in England was not behind the prosecutions as was the case both with the Inquisition and the Calvinists. Laws against witchcraft were passed in 1542, 1563 and 1604; but we find throughout this hundred years in England many admirable acquittals. How much children went in fear of witchcraft at this time, may be judged by the North Country ballad of the False Knight upon the Road, in which the schoolboy on his way to school gets the better of the devil by his ready answers.

For rich boys who survived their early years and who were often still taught at home by tutors, the sixteenth century was a time of increased delight, with the pleasures of literature and tennis added to tournaments, hunting and every kind of sport. For girls the century brought possibly the happiest of all innovations, the invention of the spinning wheel. This released women everywhere from spending most of their time in the dulllest of their occupations, and rich girls were now encouraged to take part as enthusiastically as their brothers in the passion for learning. They might now learn Greek and Latin as well as French and Italian, to play all sorts of musical instruments as well as to dance and sing, and they had time to do exquisite embroidery as well. They did not always achieve their learning without tears, for girls as well as boys were beaten and received bobs and pinches, but the natural bluestocking is usually docile as well as clever, and we may assume that girls were beaten less often than their brothers.

At the Reformation, the Church Schools were either abolished, or taken over by the reformers. There seems to have been no change in curriculum. Virgil



FRONTISPIECE TO *THE DISCOVERY OF WITCHES* BY MASTER MATTHEW HOPKINS
From the original edition of 1647

and Ovid were still the chief Latin books, and early in the sixteenth century when Greek was added, they had Aesop and Pindar. Christ's Hospital, begun originally as a hospital for sick children and home for foundlings in 1547 on the site of the suppressed Franciscan monastery (the Grey Friars) in its first two years began a school of its own for older children, with a Grammer Schoole Mayster and a Grammer Usher, a Schoole-Maister for Musicke and, "Schoole-Maisters for the Petties A.B.C." Now in the sixteenth century the schoolboy with shining morning

face was to be seen everywhere creeping like snail unwillingly to school. He took his quills, penknife, ink and paper with him. At school was to be found the horn-book, a sheet of horn inscribed with the alphabet and numerals in a wooden frame. Girls learned to read and do needlework at the same time by means of samplers, squares of linen on which they embroidered letters and figures, texts and prayers, patterns and pictures. Pieces of especial excellence were preserved and are much prized now. They contain the little worker's age and the date at which they were finished. It would be interesting to know, as well, the date at which they were begun. Much toil and pain must usually have gone to them. The learning that at the Renaissance had been a privilege and a joy had become a stern task. Boys of all sorts must now become clerks. The birch rod was part of every schoolroom's furniture and, though a few humane men might hold with Roger Ascham that beating would drive a child from his book rather than to it, beating was the rule. Indeed, some Elizabethan schoolmasters are described as behaving "like maniacs." The schools resounded with blows and cries. Among enlightened people, by the end of the century, slowness and want of understanding were not, in theory, faults to be punished, but it is certain that too often they were interpreted by schoolmasters as the "moral fault" of idleness.

Children began to learn their letters at the age of two and a half. We find in Elizabethan days a forerunner of Kindergarten methods, however, in a set of wooden bricks marked with the letters of the alphabet, so that the Petties could learn their A.B.C. while they played, and there are fortunately other signs that there was a good deal of child happiness in this age.

By the end of the century, a convincing proof of the wisdom of spoiling children had come from the pen of a spoilt child. Montaigne, who was born in 1533, described how his parents brought him up, and his essays which had a great vogue on the Continent and also in England for a generation before Florio's version appeared in 1603, began to influence the upbringing of children from that time forward. It is fitting that this waft of deliberate kindness should arrive from the South in this century, with carnation pinks and apricot trees. Montaigne told an admiring world that he was never beaten, but that he learned to speak Latin as easily as French, by means of conversation, so that when, at the age of six, he went to school, he took his place in class with boys many years his senior. In a well-known passage he suggests that schools should properly be places of delight hung with green boughs rather than places of misery decorated with "bloody twigs."

From the end of this century we find two divergent attitudes to children in England, the old, mediæval puritanical attitude, and the other which preferred children to be, in the puritan sense of the word, "spoilt." Hints of the existence of such happy infants are to be found in Shakespeare, who mentions, though without approval, the father who threatens to beat his child, but gets no further than binding the apple twigs together; makes Beatrice refer to "my lady's eldest son ever more tattling," and in Mamillius in *A Winter's Tale*, gives us a portrait which suggests a living model.



'THE BOYHOOD OF RALEIGH'
Oil painting by Sir John Millais, 1870

- Hermione: Take the boy to you: he so troubles me,
'Tis past enduring.
- First Lady: Come, my gracious lord,
Shall I be your playfellow?
- Mamillius: No, I'll none of you.
- First Lady: Why, my sweet lord?
- Mamillius: You'll kiss me hard, and speak to me as if
I were a baby still . . .
- Hermione: . . . Come, Sir, now
I am for you again: pray you, sit by us,
And tell's a tale.
- Mamillius: Merry, or sad, shall't be?
- Hermione: As merry as you will.
- Mamillius: A sad tale's best for winter: I have one
Of sprites, and goblins.
- Hermione: Let's have that, good sir.
Come on, sit down, come on, and do your best
To fright me with your sprites; you're powerful at it.



THE FAMILY OF THE DUKE OF SUFFOLK
Sketch for a portrait group by Hans Holbein, 1497? - 1543

Mamillius: There was a man——
Hermione: Nay, come, sit down; then on.
Mamillius: Dwelt by a churchyard: I will tell it softly,
Yond crickets shall not hear it.
Hermione: Come on, then,
And give't me in mine ear.

Mamillius is six years old and soon to die at what, to Shakespeare, doubtless seemed a very natural age.

We get a glimpse of such a boy in real life at a banquet to celebrate the defeat of the Spanish Armada; a nephew of Sir Philip Sidney is described as "playing the wag so prettily and boldly," "prating beyond measure," and being given sweetmeats by the Admiral. Clearly it was possible now for children to chatter more agreeably than jays. We may picture such children clothed like the men and women of their day in doublet and trunk-hose, stomacher and farthingale, slashed and embroidered to their heart's content, and wearing ruffs. Black, white, grey and crimson seem to have been the prevailing colours at Court; satin, velvet



HENRY, PRINCE OF WALES, AND SIR JOHN HARRINGTON
Oil painting attributed to Isaac Oliver, 1603

and taffetas the prevailing materials. Among the worsted-clad we find two other children, a boy ridden down in the street and killed by the Spanish Ambassador, occasioning a riot of indignant Londoners in 1618; and a boy with an ague upon whom, at random, a successful experiment with rhubarb was made. The age of scientific research had begun, and physicke was now added to the dangers against which the young were compelled to contend.

SOME CHILDREN OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE prosperity and new power in the world which came to England with the decline of Spain, must not disguise from us, that the poor had never been more wretched than in Elizabeth's day. Merry England had emerged from the silent fear of Henry VIII's reign; all trades were prospering and fortunes were being made as quickly from slave-trading and piracy as they had been from the despoiling of the monasteries; but the farmers and farm labourers were being

sacrificed to the wool trade; land-owners were enclosing the commons and turning the poor men's grazing ground and vegetable plots into sheep farms; multitudes of homeless vagrants thronged the roads. The Poor Laws were passed; begging was made a crime; the first workhouses were instituted, and the system of social uncharity came into being that was to disgrace England for the next 350 years. Each parish was made responsible for the destitute poor who were found in it, and so the custom arose of driving poor people from one parish to another on a continual journey. Parish records are to be found of this date which tell of burials of children found dead from starvation upon the roads. In the seventeenth century we hear for the first time—an incongruity amid the white and amber satin and brown velvet of Van Dyck portraits—of children employed as chimney sweeps.

At the court of James I, however, there were plenty of beautiful children. Here was a king who had doubtless read Montaigne and whose children grew up on the best of terms with their tutors. Here is the letter that Charles I, as a little prince, wrote to his tutor the Earl of Newcastle who was, evidently, away ill.

"My Lord,

I would not have you take too much physicke, for it doth always make me worse, and I think it will do the like with you. I ride every day, and am ready to follow any directions from you. Make haste back to him that loves you."

Later, when he grew up, Charles was an affectionate and gentle father and not less friendly to other children than to his own. We may read a description of one of the Buckingham children, Mary Villiers, "sweet, pretty Moll," throwing her arms round his neck when she meets him, to the consternation of the bystanders, as if he had been one of her "playfellows." In the humane and learned Falkland circle, too, there was the utmost affection between children and parents, though tinged with more awe than in that of the Court. We are not so far from the Middle Ages when we read of the fate of Charles I's second daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, who came with a younger brother to Whitehall to take farewell of her father on the eve of his execution, "the Princess most sensible of her Royal Father's Condition, as appeared by her sorrowful look and excessive weeping;" we are told. Later, when the king was dead, we learn that Mr. Speaker Lenthall having visited the children at Penshurst and found them being treated with "too much respect" for Cromwellian taste, they were sent instead to their father's old prison, Carisbrooke Castle, and there the little girl fell ill of a fever, and was found one morning dead "her cheek resting upon her open bible."

This was but one of the many small victims of Puritan intolerance. With the growing ascendancy of Puritanism a change for the worse appears in the condition of English children, as may be seen from the humane and sensible letter of an Elizabethan great-grandmother written to her puritanical grandson, Sir Ralph Verney, in the sixteen-forties. The child about whom she writes was only three years old, and had been staying with her long enough to forget his parents.



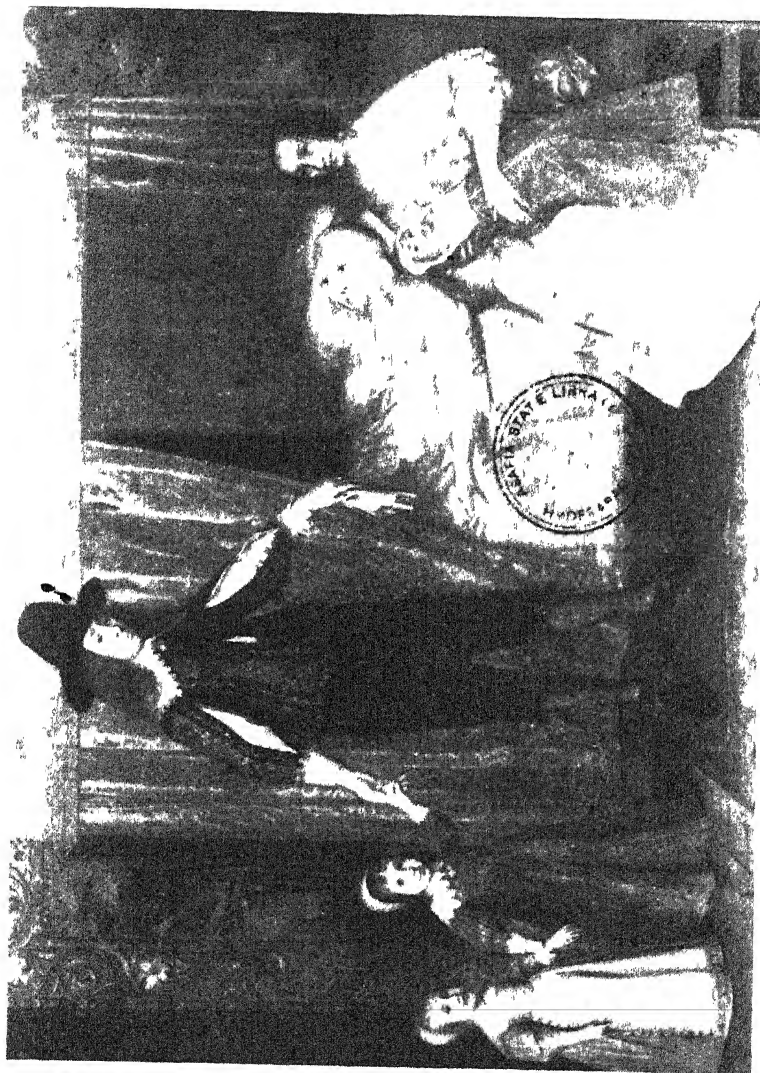
PAMELA TELLS A NURSERY TALE.
Oil painting by Joseph Highmore, c.1744
Illustration to *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson.



THE WEDGWOOD FAMILY

Oil painting by George Stubbs, c 1780

By courtesy of the Wedgwood Museum, Stoke-on-Trent



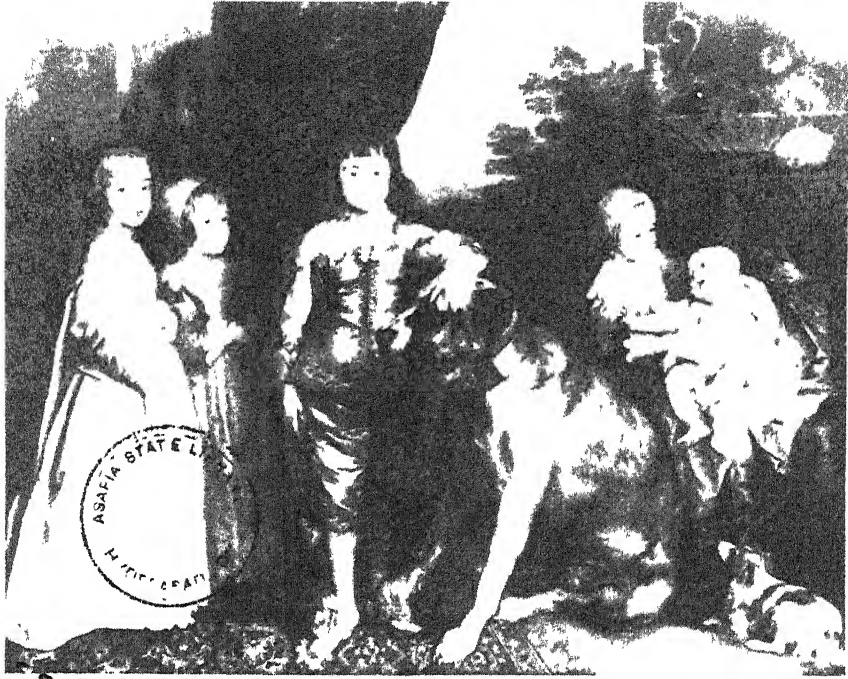
THE SALTONSTALL FAMILY THE VISIT TO THE BEDSIDE
Oil painting by David des Granges, 1611-c.1675

"I hear he is disliked, he is so strange." She says, "Son, you did see he was not so, nor is not so to any with whom he is acquainted, and he must be won with fair means. Let me beg of you and his mother that nobody whip him but Mr. Parry; if you do go a violent way with him, you will be the first that will rue it, for I verily believe that he will receive injury from it, indeed, Ralph, he is too young to be strudged in any forcing way. I heard that your father was troubled to see him so strange. Pray tell him from me I thought he had more wit than to think a child of his age could make friends at once. He knows the child was good enough in my house; pray show him what I have written about him and be sure the child is not frightened by no means; he is of a gentle, sweet nature soon corrected."

The great-grandmother besought in vain, however. This unfortunate child whose "sweet and promising countenance," so an uncle wrote of him, "prognosticated more for itself than we can do for it," was constantly in trouble with his father, his tutors and his schoolmasters. In his last year at Winchester, we find him writing to his elder brother: "I think I have behaved myself so fairly since Whitsuntide, that Dr. Stanley can inform my father of nothing that I have committed that I need be ashamed of, therefore I would intreat you to urge him to forget my former misdeeds." This was the century in which a child of five was praised for his "sober company." Even the fondest and kindest parents overloaded their children with learning and the task of being good. John Evelyn's little son, he tells us, at two years and a half old could :

"perfectly reade any of the English, Latin, French or Gothic letters, pronouncing the three first languages exactly. He had before his fifth year, or in that year, not only skill to read most written hands, but to decline all the nouns, conjugate the verbs regular and most of the irregular; . . . got by heart almost the entire vocabularie of Latine and French primitives and words, could make congruous syntax, turn English into Latin and vice verse, construe and prove what he read, and did the government and use of relatives, verbs, substantives, eclipses and many figures and tropes; . . . began himself to write legibly, and had a strong passion for Greek."

This dear little boy was "apt in ingenious application of tables and morals, for he had read Aesop;" "had a wonderful disposition to mathematics, having by heart divers propositions of Euclid that were read to him in play," . . . "as to his piety, astonishing were his applications of scripture upon occasion, and his sense of God; he had learn'd all his Catechisms early, and understood the historical part of the Bible and New Testament to a wonder," and so on and so on, a "grave" child but all "prettiness." Alas, he died, in his stricken father's opinion, "suffocated by the women and maids that tended him, and covered him too hot with blankets as he lay in a cradle, near an excessive hot fire in a close room." Dying was so much a child's business in those days, that children were quite aware of their probable fate and this child called his father to him and told him that "for all I loved him so dearly, I should give my house, land, and all my fine things to his brother Jack."



THE FIVE CHILDREN OF CHARLES I
Oil painting by Van Dyck, 1599 - 1641

It is happy to read, in contrast, about the same date, of two luckier little boys, the elder of whom at six years old had just been promoted to breeches.

"Never had any bride that was to be drest upon her wedding night more hands about her, some the legs and some the arms, the taylor buttoning, and others putting on the sword, and so many lookers-on, had I not been amongst them I could not have seen him' . . . He looks taller and prettier than in his coats. Little Charles rejoiced as much as he did, for he jumped all the while about him."

We may rejoice that we need not see the whole century dark with the sufferings of children.

Translations of Montaigne and of another enlightened Frenchman, Corderius had been published in this country, and a refugee from Germany, Comenius, had contributed to civilised opinion on education. By the time of the Restoration all kinds of things were being invented for children's pleasure. There were books not only to teach them to be good and to help them to learn ; but books that might be read purely for entertainment ; as, for example, a translation of Aesop, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Holy War*, the Alphabet that begins A was an

Archer who shot at a frog, and a rhyme to teach punctuation that has the imaginative quality of the prose and poetry of the age.

I saw a Peacock with a fiery Tail,

* I saw a blazing Star that dropt down Hail . . .

By the end of the century children were not only reading Good Godly Books, such as Puritans desired for them, but whatever the pedlars happened to bring to the door. While his parents read political or religious tracts, and his nurse read ballads and sang him to sleep with them, the child might read the story of Guy, Earl of Warwick, or *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, in a chap book, and from 1608 onwards a series of enthralling stories seems to have appeared illustrated with wood-cuts and sold at a penny until by the end of the eighteenth century every intelligent child had acquired some knowledge of the more striking facts or fancies of the past centuries. Children at this time had dolls, dolls-houses, furniture and tea sets, skipping-ropes, hoops and tops as well as balls. A new danger was gun-powder, with which little boys were prone to play, for guns whether for sport or civil war were much in evidence in the seventeenth century and seem to have been left easy of access. Fond and kind as many parents were to their children, by the end of the century, infant life seems to have been more insecure than ever.





By courtesy of L. C. Patterson, Esq

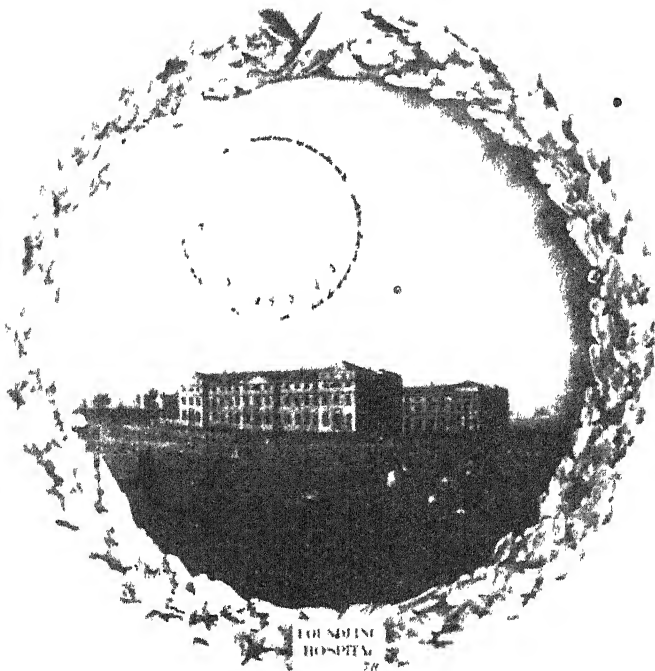
HEAD OF A BOY
Oil painting by William Etty, 1787-1849



By courtesy of Lord Gerald Wellesley

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON WITH HIS GRANDCHILDREN

Manuscript B. Robert Thorburn, 1852



THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL
Oil painting by Richard Wilson, 1746

CHILDREN UNDER QUEEN ANNE AND THE GEORGES

INFANT mortality may be considered to have reached its pinnacle in the time of Queen Anne, when, of all her thirteen children, no single one survived. Why, in an age of greatly increased comfort this was so, it is not impossible to discover. The Restoration had brought with it an increase of profligacy, sexual diseases were unchecked, drunkenness had increased and the comparatively amiable drunkenness produced by beer and wine, had been exchanged for the savage drunkenness produced by spirits. Brandy and gin were drunk by rich and poor. The habit of tippling had spread to women. It will be remembered that Mirabel, as his side of the marriage bargain with Mollamant, insists that she shall not drink spirits with her friends when she pretends to be drinking tea, and also that she shall not crush his child's head with tight stays when she is breeding. The simple mediæval pride in producing children had



GEORGE III AS PRINCE OF WALES WITH THE DUKE OF YORK AND THEIR TUTOR
Oil painting by Richard Wilson, 1714-1782

disappeared, and the pride of producing healthy children had not yet, for two centuries, begun.

Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the toll of young life went on. The chief cause of infant mortality was the refusal or inability of many mothers to nurse their children, and the disastrous new custom of bringing them up "by hand." Dr. Hans Sloane, the leading Physician of his day, was resolutely opposed to the breeding up of infants "by hand" and demanded breast-feeding for the Foundlings. He pointed out that one-third of those who died yearly of all diseases and accidents, were children under two years old, and that the cause of this high proportion was the lack of proper food. He produced statistics to his fellow governors of the Foundling Hospital that proved his case relentlessly month by month and summed up, at the end of the quarter,—“Total to wet nurses 26, dyed 5. Total to dry nurses 63, dyed 34.”

The Foundling Hospital of 1748 was the creation of the best minds and hearts of the time. In this charity, for perhaps the first time, ardent Christians discarded retribution as a satisfactory consequence of error. Bastardy until the end of the



PRINCESS SOPHIA MATILDA OF GLOUCESTER
Oil painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1723-1792

Stuart reigns, had not been a very great shame. Men took care of their bastards and were often proud of them, in many cases bringing them to their wives or mothers to bring up. But after the Puritan era, standards of respectability had altered and censoriousness had increased, while at the same time the standard of masculine conduct had reached a new low level. It became an overwhelming disaster for a girl to have an illegitimate baby. Seduced and abandoned, she had no way of making a living but the streets ; and to avoid this fate, a girl frequently killed her baby "to hide her shame" and, if the crime were discovered, was hanged for it. This pitiful story had become common, when Captain Coram set himself to alleviate its misery. The sight of a dead baby abandoned in the street first turned his thoughts to this new charity. He devoted his life to it and the fortune that he had made in ship-building and trading, so that in his final years he himself lived upon private charity. He had enlisted in his cause by that time, however, the chief artists and musicians of the day and a large part of the aristocracy. Hogarth presented one of his best-known pictures, *The March to Finchley*, to the Foundling Hospital, Handel gave there the first performance

of the Messiah and left it the MSS. The name of Reynolds is to be found among the first subscribers. The Foundlings, thanks to Sir Hans Sloane, were successfully reared, taught to read and write, cast accounts and sing; if they were girls they learned to sew and do housework of all kinds; if boys, they were taught trades.

Meantime in the rest of England the cleavage between the two sorts of upbringing had achieved its widest division. On the one hand, for example, we have the home of Charles James Fox, on the other that of the little Wesleys. Henry Fox, Lord Holland, Charles James's father, was determined that his son's "spirit should not be broken" . . . "the world will do that business fast enough," he said and describes the boy to his satisfaction as "very well, very pert, very argumentative." Charles James Fox is the original of the almost legendary story, still told in English nurseries, of the spoilt child who was allowed to ride on the saddle-of-mutton with his feet splashing in the gravy.

In contrast, let us look at the Wesley family which set a regimen for very many of the English young during the next hundred years. The children, Wesley tells us, were kept largely upon "spoon-meat" and made to eat sparingly till the age of six, as this was supposed to allay the angry passions, and "when turned a year old and some before, they were taught to cry softly and fear the rod." The great thing in Wesley's opinion was to "conquer the will betimes."

Lest either of these methods be regarded as conclusive, let it be remembered that Charles James Fox grew up to be a drunkard who sometimes became sick while making a speech in Parliament, and that he once lost £35,000 in a single evening at cards; whereas one of the little Wesleys lived to introduce Bach to the British public and to produce a highly creditable illegitimate son who became the conductor of the Three Choirs Festival.

Children, by the middle of the century, were still dying fast. Mrs. Thrale lost all her little sons, catastrophes which she attributed to their being compelled by Mr. Thrale to leave the salubrious country house at Streatham every year to spend some months in the neighbourhood of the Brewery at Southwark. It was becoming increasingly the custom for comparatively rich children to be brought up by cottage wives in the country instead of in their own houses—a complete turn of fashion's wheel. We find the Austens, a family in which all were handsome and clever and healthy, being brought up in this way. In Jane Austen's intelligent upper-middle-class world, children were now becoming happier than ever before, with good health added to the affectionate kindness with which they were treated. Children usually tend to be spoilt, she remarks somewhere, but learn to correct themselves as they grow older. We find her in her letters noting as innovations the shortness of little girls' petticoats and their increased friendliness. "What is become of all the shyness in the World?" she asks. "Moral as well as Natural Diseases disappear in the progress of time, and new ones take their place. Shyness and the Sweating Sickness have given way to Confidence and Paralytic Complaints." She describes a young visitor "talking away and examining the Treasures



HURRAH for the spring time! hurrah
for the may!

We will gather its sweet-smelling
flowers;

We will roam in the woods on this
beautiful day,

And in pleasure we'll pass the glad
hours!

E'en the moths and the birds all seem
filled with delight,

For again has returned sunny spring,

See the Cousins are looking so happy
and bright,

As they list to the birds while they
sing

By courtesy of Frank Hollings, Esq.

"HURRAH FOR THE SPRINGTIME"

A page from *Pictures and Rhymes of Grandma's Times*

One of Dean's famous coloured Toy Books for Children, published c.1870



By courtesy of Frank Hollings, Esq.

"A FLEET OF DUCKS IS ON THE POND"

A page from *Easy Words and Easy Thoughts*

One of Dean's famous coloured Toy Books for Children, published c.1870

of my Writing-desk drawer," while she writes, "not at all shy of course—very happy, I believe."

The schools to which girls of her sort were sent were pleasant places, where milliners, and hair-dressers to curl the hair à la Brutus, seem to have ranked almost as importantly as governesses and tutors. Indian muslins and cotton stuffs had replaced silks and satins; dimity, which an Earl's daughters might be found wearing in the seventeenth century, was now within reach of everyone, and by the end of the eighteenth century we find, for the first time, a well-laundered world. Boys' schools continued to be rough and cruel places with insufficient supervision from the masters, and poor boys continued everywhere to be ferociously beaten, as we learn from Lamb's account of his schooldays at Christ's Hospital.

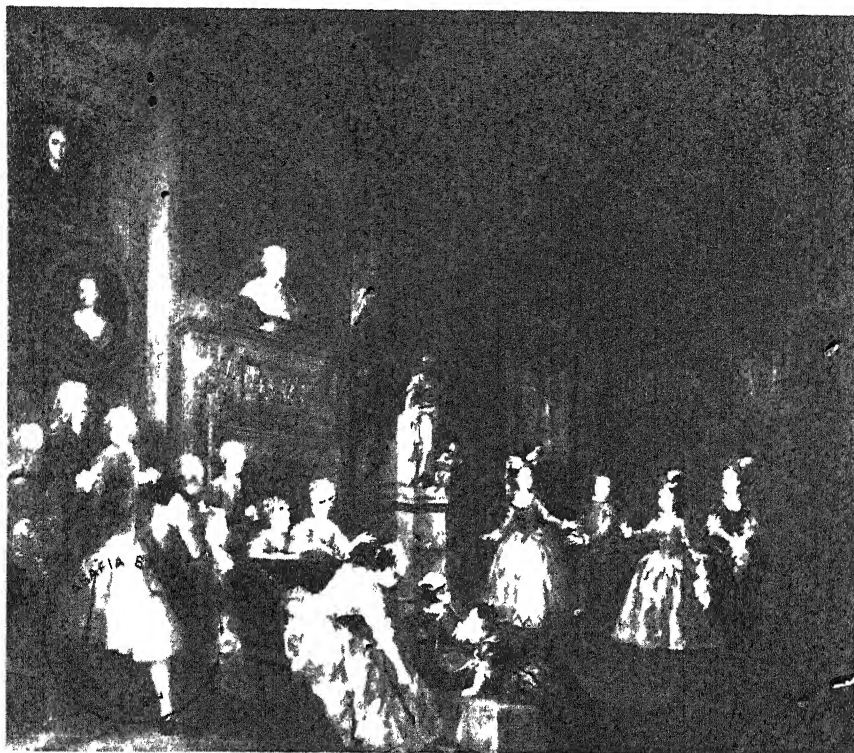
The misfortunes of poor children were, indeed, rapidly increasing. In the sixteenth century they had received as good an education as the rich. At the Foundling Hospital they had received an education that had been regarded as a means of enabling them to earn an independent living; but with the coming of the Industrial Revolution, children became creatures to be exploited. Blake, who, as a Swedenborgian, had probably escaped the rigours of an ordinary school, and saw the world with eyes unblinded by accustomed misery, wrote of the chimney sweeper:

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry "'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.
There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd; so I said
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair." . . .

but Blake suggested no remedy in this world.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

There is no sign, humanitarian and genius as he was, that Blake conceived the abolition of child chimney-sweepers any more than did Lamb a generation later, though Lamb also writes with exquisite tenderness of "these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits, the tops of chimneys, in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind." "A lesson of patience"—Lamb was not indifferent to their sufferings; but those for whom the miseries of the world were miseries and would not let them rest, had yet to be born; Shelley in 1792, Keats at the turn of the century, and Kingsley and Dickens a few years later. There was, so early as 1773, only one man who protested against the employment of "climbing



THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO
A CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE OF DRYDEN'S COMEDY, 1731
Oil painting by William Hogarth

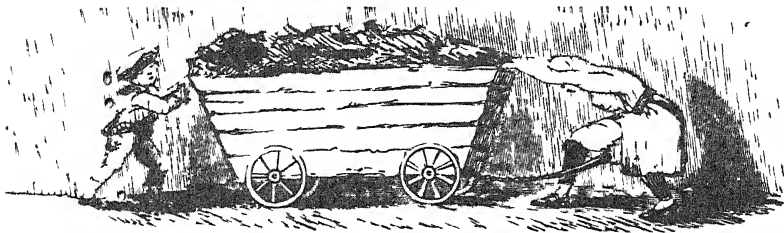
boys," as they were euphemistically called; this was Jonas Hanway, the inventor of the umbrella, who pointed out that the work could be done just as well by "machinery." A hundred years later, in 1873, we find Lord Shaftesbury in Parliament still saying the same thing. Yet another "climbing boy" had been suffocated in a flue. Several such accidents took place every year, nor was death by suffocation the greatest part of these children's sufferings. We read of bleeding knees and elbows treated with brine to harden them, we read of the "reluctance" of children to make the first ventures in climbing, we read of heads and shoulders covered with stripes and bruises; we read of fires of straw lighted beneath the children to make them climb; we read of children dying of sweep's cancer. Children of five and a half used as chimney sweepers had a tendency to "go off" just as quietly as you might fall asleep in a chair, said one sweep giving evidence before a Royal Commission. "It is no light thing to have a life lost in your service,"



RUSTIC CHILDREN
Oil painting by Thomas Gainsborough, 1727 - 1788

he said. He considered five and a half too young for the work. Six he thought "a nice trainable age."

There was no necessity for this form of employment, no excuse of ignorance of its horrors on the part of the public. Commission after commission reported on the facts and gave publicity to the truth. Law after law was passed, but no honest attempt was made to put the law into action. In the eighteen-sixties the employment of such boys was actually increasing. The whole thing could have been stopped by making compulsory the putting of trapdoors in the sides of flues; but because these might have to be made in bedrooms or other visible places, it was not done. The opposition to the proposal came from the evil sort among sweeps who deliberately scattered soot on furniture from the sweeping machines to pretend that they made more dirt than did the boys, and also from the owners of big houses.



CHILDREN DRAGGING COAL TRUCKS
Illustration to the Children's Employment Commission Report, 1842

CHILDREN AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

THE whole system of society in England had changed for the worse. Land enclosures, from the eighteenth century onward, as in Elizabeth's day, had driven the rustic population from the countryside, and a horde of workless, starving vagrants had flocked to the towns. Greed and cruelty flourished as never before in England. With the invention of machinery, the rich were able to profit from the misfortunes of their fellows. Children were driven by the poverty of their parents—sometimes, too, by their selfishness—into the factories and the mines. The story of the Industrial Age throughout Europe is the story of the martyrdom of childhood. In England child-slaves, orphans and friendless, were supplied in droves by the workhouses to any employer, however brutal, and any employment, however dangerous and degrading. They were deformed and maimed by machinery, they were given strange new “industrial” diseases. They were starved and beaten. Children of ten, of seven, of five, even of three, spent twelve hours at a time or even whole days and nights at a time, in the darkness of the mines. Sometimes they worked up to their ankles in water minding the pumping apparatus ; sometimes in little cells pulling the string that ventilated the shafts while the trucks, their only company, went by. The surprising thing is, not that the first industrial experiment shared in the general filth, brutality and disorderliness of the times : but that so much pleasant life could co-exist with it. Fortunately, England has always been not less a country of philanthropists than of industrialists.

England took the lead in reform. Slowly, very slowly slight improvements were made. The hours of work were reduced from 14 to 12 and, after the Chartist Agitation, from 12 to 10. “Never,” commented Shaftesbury on one parliamentary debate, “have I seen such a display of selfishness, frugidity to every human sentiment, such ready and happy self-delusion.” This may be taken as summarising the frame of mind of most of the propertied classes from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution until modern times. In 1850, children of less than ten years old were, with women and girls, excluded altogether from the mines, but it was not till 1875, twelve years after the publication of Kingsley's *Water Babies* that boy chimney-sweepers were prohibited. This fifty years from 1800



THE GIN SHOP
Drawing by George Cruikshank

onwards must be regarded as the blackest period in English social history. Religion and money-making had contrived to get on to the same side, and it was possible to be very rich, very greedy, very cruel and very orthodox all at once. Probably, owing to the increasing use of white bread, toothache had become common and laudanum was the cure for it, and the two together may help to account for some of the prevailing cruelty and gloom. There was also the revival of Calvinism which held that all children are by nature evil and while they have none but the natural evil to guide them, pious and prudent parents must check their naughty passions in any way that they have in their power.

Not only poor children suffered from the religious influence of the time. Mrs. Sherwood, author of *The Fairchild Family*, is representative of the ordinary well-to-do religious people of her age. Her Mr. Fairchild, with his pious ejaculations, his prayers and sermons, beating his children or taking them to see, as an awful warning, and an awful and very well written warning it is, the body of a murderer hanging in chains, is held up to her readers for admiration. In real life, we may find a father of the same sort in Mr. Brontë, who burnt his children's coloured shoes rather than let them wear such vanities, though the alternative was to let them come in from a walk with wet feet, and have no shoes to change. It is not surprising in view of their upbringing, that so many little Brontës died. Charlotte's account of their school-days in *Jane Eyre*, is the perfect commentary



'THE FIGHT INTERRUPTED'
Oil painting by William Mulready, 1816

on the mingled piety and cruelty of the times. Dickens's Mr. Murdstone, forty years later, is Mr. Fairchild seen with modern eyes. *Oliver Twist* is the first proclamation of Children's Rights. Now at last unimaginative people were compelled to feel in their own hearts the sufferings of others.

ENGLISH CHILDREN OF YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

IT was in the very blackest period of industrialism that Jane and Ann Taylor wrote their *Hymns for Infant Minds* which begin :

I thank the Goodness and the Grace
That on my birth have smiled,
And made me, in these Christian days,
A happy English child.

The Taylors' moral tales are of a much more civilised kind than those of most of their contemporaries. Their admonitions often end with a kiss, and the worst that befalls a young delinquent who has been so careless as to lose a pin, is that



● ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE WITH HIS SISTERS, EDITH AND ALICE
Water colour by George Richmond, 1843

she cannot get ready in time to go and see the ascension of an Air Balloon. It is interesting to know that in her old age in the middle of the century, Ann Taylor had grown milder still, and where in a youthful poem she had written:

For God, who lives above the skies,
Would look with vengeance in His eyes,
If I should ever dare despise
My Mother.

she changed the lines as follows:

For could our Father in the skies
Look down with pleased or loving eyes,
If ever I could dare despise
My Mother?

"Vengeance," she wrote, "is not a word I should now employ." It is a remark typical of the altered outlook of the Age. For a more amiable race of human beings was coming into existence.

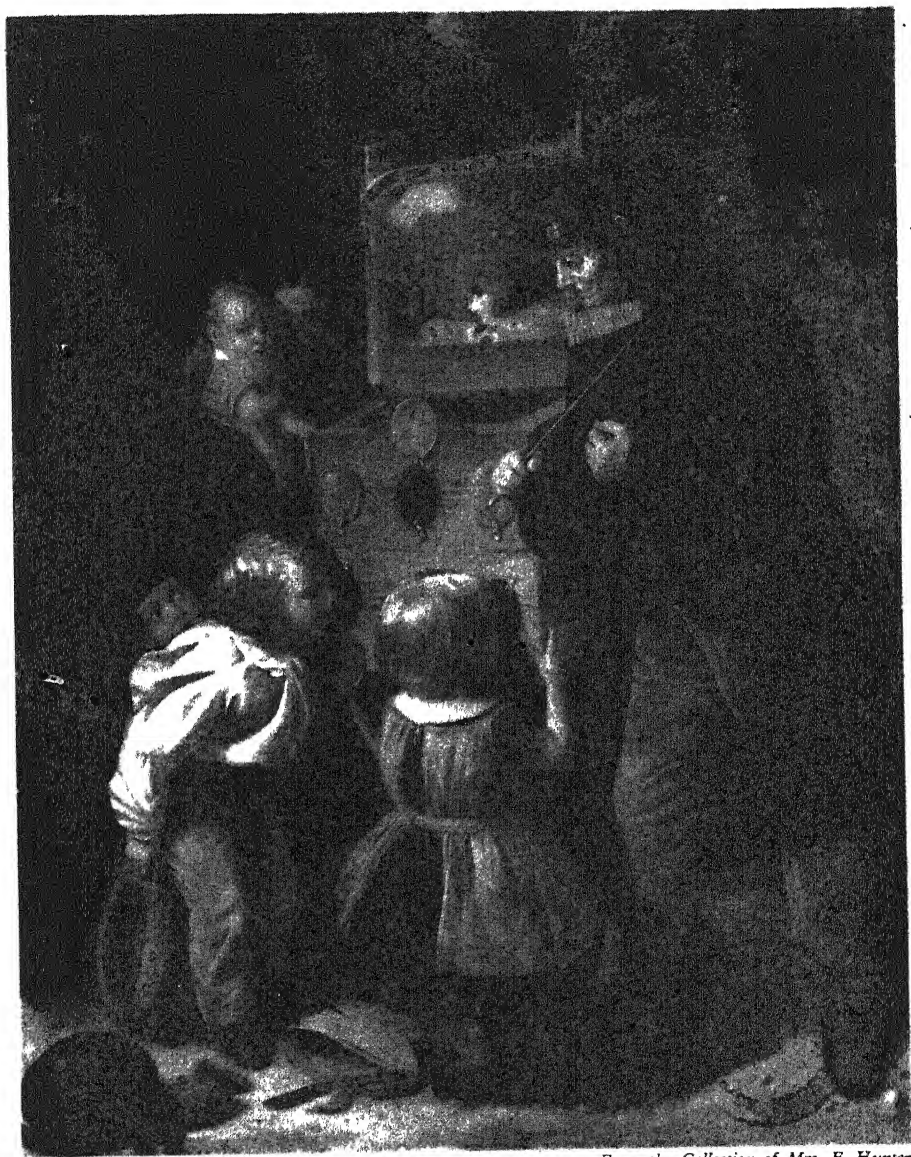
There were still dismal households where children were made unhappy; but unhappiness was no longer regarded as their inevitable portion. By 1850 a book



‘A GUTTER BALL’
Drawing by Phil May from *Guttersnipes*

with an epoch-making name had been published, *Reading Without Tears*, and the ideas of Rousseau via the Edgeworths, and Mr. Day of *Sandford and Merton* fame, were beginning to bear fruit. It was thought possible to turn children into learned and well-behaved citizens without beating or frightening them. Children were discovered to be charming people. Eminent men wrote Nursery classics for them; Southey *The Three Bears*, Ruskin *The King of the Golden River*, Thackeray *The Rose and the Ring*, and the Age of Fun burst into the well-to-do nursery with Lear and Lewis Carroll and the comic histories of Dicky Doyle. Now we find picture books, fairy tales, musical boxes, seaside holidays, hoops and skipping ropes, battle-dores and shuttlecocks, rocking-horses, circuses, theatres, toy-theatres, fireworks, chocolates and good uncles everywhere increasing. Stories no longer needed to have a moral. Albert the Good had introduced Christmas trees into England. Of babies at Court there were, as elsewhere, almost too many, for when the Duchess of Kent said to Queen Victoria that after the age of six children's angry passions "went off" and that to hear them cry made a sad impression, the Queen replied, "when you have eight, Mamma, that wears off."

Children, however, love the company of other children, and little Victorians did not feel that there were too many of them, whatever their harrassed parents may have felt. Families of eleven invited their cousins to stay. From now onwards the children of the rich had come into their own. They went to pantomimes, they pulled crackers, they played hide and seek all over the house. There was a great deal of party-giving and party-going. In the other type of household little Edmund Gosse, an only child, tells us, in *Father and Son* how, when he was invited



From the Collection of Mrs. E. Hunter

VICTORIAN CHILDREN WATCHING A PEEP-SHOW

Oil painting by Matthias Robinson of Chelsea



By courtesy of the Artist

CHILDREN FROM THE TOWN
Invited to the country, 1940
Oil painting by B. Theodor Walker

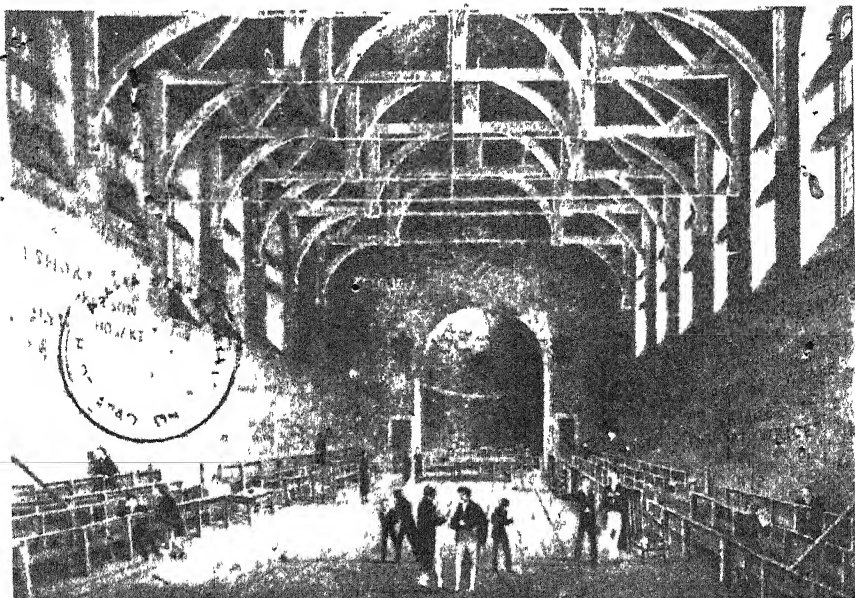
to a party, his father made him pray to God for guidance as to what he ought to do, and how little Edmund prayed, and after two hours emerged from his room and told his father that God wished him to go to the party. So to the party he went, for the father though ultra-puritanical was not unkind; but never again was Edmund told to ask guidance on this subject; that was the only party. "My father and I were great friends," Gosse could, however, write.

The Seventies saw compulsory free education established for the poor, and the barrier of the school-leaving age interposed between children and the factories; the same decade saw the establishment of the first Kindergartens. In the Eighties, many of the philanthropic societies which had been coming into existence throughout the century, combined to form the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children from which much improved legislation has sprung.

It was the Age of Social Reform and an increasing multitude of social reformers advanced upon the slums. It was found necessary to teach the disinherited children of the poor not only how to read, but how to eat and how to play. The Industrial Age has ever since been fighting a rearguard action and in the last seventy years has suffered almost complete rout. Children have not yet been finally rescued from the factories, but this will follow when the school leaving age is raised still further, as must be done. By the Children's Charter of 1908 children's courts were instituted which rescued them from the common prisons and from association with criminals and by the same Act the exploitation of children was generally curtailed.

The importance of fresh air was discovered in the nineties, and the Fresh Air Fund and The Children's Country Holiday Fund began to take slum children into the country. After the last war there was a conspicuous change in the appearance of children everywhere. The poor child with towsted hair, wrinkled black stocking and heavy boots has disappeared. Thanks to the new fashion of bobbed hair, and the new cheap shops with their well-cut clothes and shoes, the poor child has become all but indistinguishable from the rich child, except in speech.

School-feeding, opposed for so long by the Victorians and pre-Victorians who, until the last few years, still harboured among us, is now established as a part of national policy, and the next generation of poor children stands a chance of being as big and heavy, age for age, as their richer brothers and sisters. At school they are being taught as the children of the rich were taught generations ago, not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but science, geography, history, and, in addition gardening, carpentry, book-binding, drawing and painting, songs and the appreciation of music, hygiene and physiology, general knowledge, drill and morris dancing and swimming—and they are taught without tears. As a final piece of good fortune the removing of schools from dangerous places into the country, has given many town children a healthier environment than they had before. As for those in towns whom bombing or parental negligence had deprived of education, they are now being restored to better conditions of organised education. For those children nowadays who like learning, there are scholarships and excellent secondary schools awaiting them.



INTERIOR OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL
Coloured lithograph by G. R. Sarjent, c.1839

While the children of the poor are no longer beaten at school, the great Public Schools have preserved their mediæval traditions, and though schoolmasters seem to behave better than they did, the sons of noble and powerful persons may still find themselves being beaten rather often by the slightly older sons of other noble and powerful persons in their capacity as prefects. Rich children indeed, in comparison with poor ones, have been doing slightly less well in recent years. They have been having their appendices and tonsils taken out very freely. They have sometimes had "good old-fashioned" nannies who kept canes in cupboards long after parents had forgotten them, though most of these dragon nannies have long been replaced by cleverer and kinder people. Freak schools have come into being, and here and there a silly rather than wicked Mr. Squeers, disguised as the avatar of a New Golden Age, has been helping children to catch scabies rather than knowledge. The latest methods of teaching are concerned chiefly with stimulating the child's desire to learn.

We hear of children choosing their own lessons like Charles James Fox and learning to speak Polish or Arabic or to play the flute as their sole acquirement; but the custom of not breaking the child's spirit has lasted long enough to bring a reaction so that wholly undisciplined children complain in later life that their characters have been ruined because they have never been compelled to finish their tapioca pudding.

